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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 2896
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1352
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2199
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 003168

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: INDIAN AMBASSADOR WANTS TO GET THE PROCESS
MOVING

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

1. (C/NF) In a December 6 meeting with the Ambassador, Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee stressed that the logistical realities of the peace agreements between the Government of Nepal (GON) and the Maoists needed to move quickly in order to succeed. Mukherjee worried about continued Maoist violations of their commitments and the recent increase in Maoist recruitment. He told the Ambassador that the GON may stall on the completion of an Interim Constitution to give the UN more time to begin functioning effectively. Mukherjee stated that large numbers of international observers would be needed to make the registration and separation of Maoists from their weapons a success, and indicated that India would have no problem with former British and Indian Gurkha soldiers performing that function. Additionally, Mukherjee said that he planned to explore whether the Government of India (GOI) would be willing to provide a large physical presence on the ground during the coming months, including perhaps active-duty Indian Gurkhas. Mukherjee indicated his support of tripartite discussions with Britain and the U.S. on plans to help build the capacity of the Nepal Police.

International Community Needs To Move Quickly

2. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on December 6, Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee stressed that the logistical support for the peace agreements between the GON and the Maoists needed to move forward quickly in order to succeed. Mukherjee said that the GOI was already planning to provide the storage containers for Maoist weapons before the arms management agreement was even signed, and he expected them to be in Nepal by December 8. The Ambassador worried that there were not yet monitors on the ground to start the process of registration of combatants and storage of weapons in the camps. Mukherjee agreed, and further worried that it may be January before UN monitors are on the ground to begin the process.

Lack Of Confidence In the UN

13. (C) Mukherjee stated that he lacked some confidence in the UN negotiators, especially John Norris, the UN's political representative to the peace negotiations. Mukherjee particularly objected to Norris's constant claims of, "nothing can happen in terms of camp management until the Maoists approve of it," noting that even the Maoists were not propagating such an extreme position. Mukherjee wondered how the international community could get the World Food Program (WFP) into the Maoist cantonments quickly to feed people. Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat had asked the WFP to take the lead, but WFP Country Representative Richard Regan had said it would take more than a letter from the Finance Ministry, according to Mukherjee. The Ambassador replied that he would push Ian Martin, the UN Secretary General's Personal Representative, to start nailing down the details of assistance to the camps by WFP and other UN agencies.

Continued Maoist Atrocities Are a Concern

14. (C) Indian Ambassador Mukherjee expressed concern about Maoist actions both inside and outside Kathmandu. He said he was approached all the time by Indian industrialists complaining about Maoist excesses against them. Mukherjee believed the Maoist central leadership had not clarified a policy against these abuses, which would therefore likely continue. Mukherjee indicated that he had heard the same reports the Ambassador had been hearing about the reasons for continued Maoist recruitment: 1) to bulk up the numbers in

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the camps and get close to the 35,000 combatants the Maoists claim to have, and 2) to keep the seasoned combatants out of the cantonments so they could continue to intimidate the public in the lead-up to the planned Constituent Assembly elections in June 2007. Both Ambassadors agreed that effective monitoring and registration in the camps would be a difficult task, but a necessary one.

Interim Constitution May Be Stalled

15. (C) Mukherjee told the Ambassador that, since it could be January before enough UN monitors arrived to effectively register combatants and monitor the cantonment process, the GON might stall on the signing of an Interim Constitution until then to give the UN time to get set up. The Ambassador said that would not be a bad idea. Mukherjee agreed, stating that the last thing India wanted was for gun-toting Maoists to be in the government. Mukherjee made it clear that such an outcome would be a huge blow to the peace process.

Former Gurkhas Okay with India

16. (C) The Ambassador asked Mukherjee about the GOI's position on the possible use of former British and Indian Gurkha soldiers as UN monitors. Mukherjee said that the GOI was supportive of the idea, as long as it was implemented quickly. Using Gurkhas would make sense, he said, since they already speak the language and know the culture of Nepal. The Ambassador worried that Gurkhas may face some pressure or intimidation from the Maoists, since they were originally Nepali themselves. Mukherjee stressed the importance of other international monitors being present and the UN giving legitimacy to the Gurkha monitors to avoid this problem.

A Push for Serving Gurkhas

17. (C/NF) Mukherjee said that he was considering asking New Delhi to abandon its aversion to a large presence on the

ground in Nepal. Only India could rapidly provide the large numbers of experts of various types that would be needed to set the stage for free and fair elections. In addition to experts on the conduct of elections, there were also in India large numbers of people with experience in a variety of UN exercises. Moreover, the Indian Army had some 45 battalions of Gurkha troops, all of whom hailed from Nepal, spoke the language, were under Indian Army discipline, and were inured to the physical discomforts they would experience as part of a monitoring mission to Nepal.

18. (C) Mukherjee worried, however, that given the historical relationship between India and Nepal, a large Indian presence in the run-up to the Constituent Assembly election would ensure that India received the blame if anything went wrong. The Ambassador replied that those who were anti-Indian in Nepal would blame New Delhi for anything that went wrong, even if there were not a single Indian brought in to help with the process. The coming 7-10 months would determine Nepal's future. If at all possible, India should grab the opportunity to make sure things turned out right.

Tripartite Discussions on Nepal Police

19. (C) Mukherjee remained concerned about the state of the Nepal Police and the lack of enforcement of law and order across the country. The Ambassador told Mukherjee that the U.S. was planning on providing technical support to the police, and so was the UK. Mukherjee expressed interest in the Ambassador's suggestion of discussions between the three countries on a unified plan of action for strengthening the capacity of the civil police to enforce law and order.

Comment

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10. (C/NF) Mukherjee appears increasingly nervous that the Maoists are not serious about separation from their weapons and coming into the political mainstream and recognizes that steps need to be taken soon to make a free and fair election in Nepal possible. In that context, he appears prepared to push his government to get more directly involved in the peace process in Nepal by providing large numbers of experts, perhaps including arms monitors. We agree with Mukherjee's analysis: nobody else can provide the presence in Nepal that India can. It would be a huge foreign policy victory for India if it could play a major role in pulling off a sustainable peace in Nepal; and if the peace process fails, India will undoubtedly bear the brunt in dealing with the aftermath of that failure.

MORIARTY